

IRELAND 2013 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ireland is a multi-party parliamentary democracy with an executive branch headed by a prime minister, a bicameral parliament (Oireachtas), and a directly elected president. The country held free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections in February and in October 2011, respectively. Authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. Security forces did not commit human rights abuses.

The principal human rights problem remained poor conditions in a few prisons and detention facilities, some of which failed to meet basic needs for hygiene, were overcrowded, and prone to prisoner violence.

Other reported human rights problems included: lengthy asylum determinations; gender inequality in the workplace with regard to pay and promotions; child abuse; violence and discrimination against immigrants, particularly Africans; and societal discrimination against the indigenous Traveller minority.

The government took steps to prosecute officials who committed human rights abuses, including in the security services and elsewhere in the government. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, and there were no reports government officials employed them.

The Garda Siochana, or Garda, is the national police force. In 2012 the Garda Siochana ombudsman (GSOC) received 2,089 complaints from members of the public as compared with 2,275 in 2011. The largest number of allegations against police related to abuse of authority (34 percent), followed by neglect of duty (27 percent). Approximately 11 percent of the allegations were for nonfatal offenses against a detainee. Civil liberties organizations expressed concern over delays in the GSOC process, particularly with respect to allegations against senior Garda officials.

The Office of the Inspector of Prisons, a statutory, independent office established in 2007, conducted multiple inspections and independent reviews of detention facilities and methods.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

While the majority of prisons met international standards, some of those that did not were upgraded during the year to meet prisoners' basic hygiene needs.

Physical Conditions: The prison population declined slightly in 2012, averaging 4,318 inmates a day. Concerns remained that some prisons exceeded their capacity.

At times authorities held detainees awaiting trial in the same facilities as convicts. In 2012 the prison population was 3.5 percent women, and 0.5 percent juveniles (below the age of 18). There were some separate prisons for women as well as separate wings in other facilities.

Prisoners in some older facilities continued to have no sanitary facilities in their cells and had to use chamber pots in a process known as "slopping out," which humanitarian organizations referred to as inhumane treatment.

The head of the Prison Service criticized the current use of solitary confinement as a method of keeping prisoners out of the general prison population for their own protection. Authorities kept approximately 25 percent of all prisoners in solitary confinement 23-hours a day because there was no other method for protecting them.

Administration: Recordkeeping on prisoners was adequate. Prisoners had access to visitors and religious observance, and they could submit complaints to judicial

authorities without censorship. Government authorities investigated credible allegations of inhumane conditions. In recent years the country took advantage of early release programs to address prison overcrowding.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted visits and monitoring by independent human rights observers and maintained an open invitation for visits from UN special rapporteurs. The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) reported that the prison inspector function was highly effective. The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture visited the country's police detention centers, prisons, and mental institutions in 2010 and published a favorable report that year.

Improvements: Acknowledging problems with overcrowding and inadequate sanitation in some of its 14 institutions, the Prison Service initiated the three-year Strategic Plan 2012-2015 and committed itself to undertake capital projects to replace outdated accommodations and facilities, reduce or eliminate chronic overcrowding in the prisons, and improve sanitary conditions. By year's end three of the four wings of Mountjoy Prison had been refurbished to include in-cell sanitation. A new wing in the Midlands Prison was completed, potentially providing 300 additional prison places.

The situation at St. Patrick's, a facility for holding 16- and 17-year-old male prisoners, improved significantly after the April 2012 announcement by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Frances Fitzgerald of an infusion of 50 million euros (\$67.5 million) in additional funding over three years to end the detention of children in St. Patrick's. As of May 2012 authorities detained all newly remanded or sentenced 16-year-olds in the children's detention facilities at Oberstown.

The government also instituted a number of improvements at St. Patrick's, including new management structures, enhanced oversight, new complaints investigation procedures, and guidelines for the imposition of disciplinary sanctions.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The Garda maintained internal security and was under the control of the Department of Justice and Equality. The Defense Forces were responsible for external security under the supervision of the Department of Defense but were also authorized certain domestic security responsibilities in support of the Garda.

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the Garda and the army. The government had effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. There were no reports of impunity involving the security forces during the year.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

An arrest typically required a warrant issued by a judge, except in situations necessitating immediate action for the protection of the public. The law provides the right to a prompt judicial determination of the legality of the detention, and authorities broadly respected this right. Authorities must inform detainees promptly of the charges against them and, with few exceptions, cannot hold them longer than 24 hours without charge. For crimes involving firearms, explosives, or membership in an unlawful organization, a judge may extend detention for an additional 24 hours upon a police superintendent's request. The law permits detention without charge for up to seven days in cases involving suspicion of drug trafficking, although police must obtain a judge's approval to hold such a suspect longer than 48 hours.

Upon arrest the law permits detainees and prisoners prompt and unrestricted access to attorneys. If a detainee does not have an attorney, the court will appoint one. The law allows detainees prompt access to family members and requires authorities to bring a detainee before a district court judge "as soon as possible" to determine bail status pending a hearing. A court may refuse bail to a person charged with a crime carrying a penalty of five years' imprisonment or more or when continued detention is deemed necessary to prevent the commission of another offense. Individuals held in police custody do not have the right to have a legal representative present during questioning, a practice the Irish Council on Civil Liberties deemed a violation of European Court of Human Rights jurisprudence on the right of access to a lawyer.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for, and the government respects, an independent judiciary.

Trial Procedures

The law provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary enforced this right.

The law provides for a nonjury “special criminal court” (SCC) when the director of public prosecutions certifies a case to be beyond the capabilities of an ordinary court. A panel of three judges – usually including one high court judge, one circuit judge, and one district judge – hears such cases in public. They reach their verdicts by majority vote. Apart from trial by jury, defendants in the SCCs enjoy most of the due process protections available to other defendants. The IHRC noted the jurisdiction of SCCs has been expanded in recent years to cover most organized-crime offenses. The IHRC also cited concerns that SCCs used a lower standard for evidence admissibility and lacked an appeal mechanism for the prosecuting authority’s decision to remand a case to an SCC.

On October 7, voters approved a referendum to establish a new Court of Appeals between the existing High and Supreme Courts and take over the existing appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. The new court would reduce the workload of the Supreme Court, allowing it to concentrate on a smaller number of more important cases.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The independent and impartial judicial system hears civil cases and appeals on civil matters, including damage claims resulting from human rights violations. Such claims may be brought before all appropriate courts, including the Supreme Court. Individuals can petition (but not formally appeal) decisions involving alleged violations by the state of the European Convention on Human Rights to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The IHRC expressed concern over limited access to government-funded legal assistance in civil actions, as compared with the more widely available resources for assistance in criminal actions.

Regional Human Rights Court Decisions

The country is subject to the jurisdiction of the ECHR. There were no binding decisions against the country during the year.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution prohibits such actions, and the government respected these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech including for members of the press, and the government respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system act jointly to promote freedom of speech and of the press.

Freedom of Speech: The constitution prohibits blasphemy, defined as publishing or uttering “matter that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters held sacred by any religion, thereby causing outrage among a substantial number of the adherents of that religion.” The law permits defendants to argue “genuine literary, artistic, political, scientific, or academic value” as a defense. There has been only one prosecution for blasphemy since 1855.

Press Freedoms: The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. The law proscribes words or behaviors likely to generate hatred against persons in the country or elsewhere because of their race, nationality, religion, national origins, or sexual orientation. The government can prohibit the state-owned radio and television network from broadcasting any material “likely to promote or incite to crime or which would tend to undermine the authority of the state.” Authorities did not invoke these prohibitions during the year.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The Censorship of Publications Board has the authority to censor books and magazines deemed indecent or obscene. The board did not exercise this authority during the year. The Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO) must classify films and videos before they can be shown or sold; it must cut or prohibit any film considered “indecent, obscene, or blasphemous” or which tends to “inculcate principles contrary to public morality or subversive of public morality.” During the year the IFCO did not prohibit any films or videos.

Internet Freedom

Individuals and groups could freely engage in the expression of views via the internet, including by e-mail. There were no government restrictions on access to the internet or credible reports the government monitored e-mail or internet chat rooms. Consistent with an EU directive, the government required telecommunication companies to retain information on all telephone and internet contacts (not content) for two years, although the IHRC questioned whether the safeguards for access to this information complied with EU law. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics, approximately 79 percent of the population used the internet in 2012.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution provides for freedoms of assembly and association, and the government respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt/.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution and statutes provide for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government respected these rights. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration, and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government established a system for providing protection to refugees. The country's active asylum system provided an adjudication process to refugees; those who received a negative result could appeal the decision; asylum seekers had access to legal advice. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) expressed concern over the length and complexity of the application and appeal processes, which could take up to six years to complete.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The country employs the Dublin III Regulation, which dictates the return of asylum applicants to the EU member state of original entry for adjudication of asylum claims.

Durable Solutions: The government operated a resettlement program accommodating up to 200 persons per year on referral from the office of the UNHCR or identified through selection missions to existing UNHCR refugee operations.

Temporary Protection: The country provides “subsidiary protection” to individuals who do not satisfy the legal criteria for refugee status but who cannot return to their country of origin due to a real risk of serious harm. Under EU guidelines individuals granted subsidiary protection are entitled to temporary residence permits, travel documents, access to employment, and equal access to health care and housing. The country has not signed onto the EU Receptions Conditions Directive; however, it had its own direct provisioning system which provided an asylum seeker room, meals, a weekly cash allowance, and access to health care. Children had access to education. Adults were not permitted to work. The country did not make a determination on subsidiary protection status at the same time as asylum status. This caused delays, as a separate subsidiary protection determination could take months to more than a year to complete. During 2012 the country received 875 applications for subsidiary protection and granted protection to 35 of these.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Observers reported the 2011 parliamentary and presidential elections were free and fair.

Participation of Women and Minorities: There were 26 women in the 166-seat Dail Eireann (lower house) and 19 in the 60-seat Seanad Eireann (senate). Two of the government's ministers were women, as were the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the director of public prosecutions, and the attorney general. Five of the 12 members of the European Parliament were women. There were members of minority religions in the lower house, the senate, and the cabinet. Despite improvements in broadening access to political participation, concerns remained that women were underrepresented in governing institutions.

The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act of July 2012 obliges parties to include at least 30 percent female candidates in the next general election or lose half of their annually provided public funding. The threshold rises to 40 percent in seven years.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government implemented these laws effectively.

Corruption: There were no reports of government corruption during the year.

Whistleblower Protection: Although introduced during the year, the country had not enacted a law for whistleblower protection by year's end.

Financial Disclosure: Public officials were subject to financial disclosure laws. The country has a number of institutions responsible for identifying and combating government corruption, including an independent comptroller and auditor general, and the Standards in Public Office Commission.

Public Access to Information: The law provides for public access to government information and requires government agencies to publish information on their activities and make such information available to citizens, noncitizens, and foreign media upon request. Authorities generally granted public freedom of information requests and provided mechanisms for appealing denials. The public's right to government information did not extend to some government organizations such as the Garda and the National Asset Management Agency.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups operated without government restriction and freely investigated and published their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were cooperative and responsive to their views. The government met with major local human rights NGOs and was responsive to them.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The government continued its efforts to merge the IHRC and the Equality Authority into the new Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). Human rights organizations, such as the Council on Civil Liberties, supported the merger in principle but were critical of a perceived lack of independence in the mechanism for appointing the director and commissioners. There were also concerns about the potential for conflict of interest between the commission and the Department of Justice, which was the source of funding, the determiner of key appointees, and the possible target of IHREC criticism.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination. The nine grounds under which discrimination is prohibited by equality legislation include: gender; civil status; family status; sexual orientation; religion; age; disability; race; and membership in the Traveller community.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and the government enforced it. During 2012, the most recent year for which data was available, there were 492 rapes among the 2,059 sexual offenses reported to authorities. Police and judicial authorities showed no reluctance to investigate and prosecute rape or sexual assaults, and most persons convicted received prison sentences of between five and 12 years. According to the director of public prosecution's most recent report, in 2012 there were 177 prosecutions for sexual offenses, resulting in 76 convictions.

The law criminalizes domestic violence, but such violence remained a problem. The law authorizes prosecution of a violent family member and provides victims

with safety orders prohibiting a person from engaging in violent actions or threats and orders barring an offender from entering the family home for up to three years.

In February the Taoiseach (prime minister) made a formal state apology to women who had worked in the Magdalene Laundries (a Catholic institution for unwed mothers or women in distressed conditions, whose last facility closed in 1996), and in June retired high court justice Quirke published *The Magdalene Commission Report* providing a redress scheme for the women. These actions were in response to the 2011 UN Committee against Torture report, which recommended the country address complaints about the cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of women who had worked in the Magdalene Laundries.

Sexual Harassment: The law obliges employers to prevent sexual harassment and prohibits dismissing an employee for making a complaint of sexual harassment. Authorities effectively enforced the law in cases of reported sexual harassment.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. Women had access to contraception and skilled attendance during childbirth.

During the year the country's president signed into law the Protection of Life during Pregnancy Bill, which allows abortion in certain cases where the life of the mother is endangered. The law responded to a 2010 European Court of Human Rights ruling and to public reactions to the death of Savita Halappanavar from complications following a miscarriage in an Irish hospital in October 2012.

Discrimination: Women have the same legal rights as men, including rights under family law, property law, and in the judicial system. Inequalities in pay and promotions persisted in both the public and private sectors.

Children

A constitutional amendment protects children's rights. The amendment requires the state to take proper account of children's rights and needs. It also ensures equal access to medical treatment and educational opportunities for boys and girls.

Birth Registration: A person born after 2004 on the island of Ireland (including Northern Ireland) was automatically a citizen if at least one parent was an Irish citizen, a British citizen, a resident of either the Republic of Ireland or Northern

Ireland entitled to reside in either without time limit, or a legal resident of the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland for three of the four years preceding the child's birth (excluding time spent as a student or an asylum seeker). Births are registered immediately.

Child Abuse: The law criminalizes engaging in or attempting to engage in a sexual act with a child under 17 years of age. The maximum sentence in such cases is five years' imprisonment, which can be increased to 10 years if the accused is a person in authority, such as a parent or teacher. The law additionally proscribes any person from engaging or attempting to engage in a sexual act with a juvenile younger than 15; the maximum sentence is life imprisonment.

Forced and Early Marriage: The legal minimum age for marriage is 18 years of age. Persons under 18 must obtain the permission of the Circuit Family Court or the High Court to marry.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: A maximum penalty of life imprisonment may be imposed for child trafficking and taking a child for sexual exploitation. A person convicted of meeting a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation faces a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment, and the law provides that a person convicted of allowing a child to be used for pornography may be sentenced to a fine of up to 31,000 euros (\$42,000), up to 14 years' imprisonment, or both. The maximum penalty is 1,900 euros (\$2,600), a year's imprisonment, or both, for producing, distributing, printing, or publishing child pornography, penalties the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children criticized as too lenient.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's report on country-specific information at http://travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country_499.html.

Anti-Semitism

According to the 2011 census, the Jewish community numbered 1,984 persons. There were few reported acts of anti-Semitism during the year. In June the planned Central Bank headquarters in Dublin was vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti. A Central Bank spokeswoman said the Garda were contacted and the graffiti was immediately removed. In November a local newspaper reported campaign posters hung in a rural part of western Ireland included two posters with

anti-Semitic messages. Authorities took down the posters within 12 hours of discovery, and government ministers condemned the posters' messages.

The Holocaust Education Trust Ireland organized a national Holocaust Day ceremony that took place on January 27, and included participation by senior government ministers and public figures.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services; the government effectively enforced these provisions. The government effectively implemented laws and programs to ensure persons with disabilities have access to buildings, information, and communications. The National Disability Authority has responsibility for setting and implementing disability standards, as well as directing disability policy. Children with disabilities generally have full access to all educational options at all levels. Observers reported minors continued to be admitted to adult psychiatric units, and human rights groups continued to criticize understaffing and working conditions at the Central Mental Health Hospital in Dundrum, the country's only secure mental health facility.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law prohibits discrimination based on language or social status, and the government enforced the law. Societal discrimination and violence against immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities, nevertheless, remained a problem. In July the Immigrant Council of Ireland announced it had received 120 reports of racist incidents between July 2012 and July 2013, including physical violence, verbal attacks, and internet harassment. According to the Economic and Social Research Institute, attitudes toward immigration have become more restrictive since the 2008 recession, with almost 20 percent of those surveyed indicating they were against the immigration of any individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. The report showed between 2002 and 2010 the percentage of individuals opposed to immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds more than trebled, from 6 to

almost 20 percent. According to the report, there were also isolated incidents of racist graffiti, but these were reported immediately and removed quickly.

Racially motivated incidents occurred that involved physical violence, intimidation, graffiti, and verbal slurs, particularly against the country's African population. NGOs reported immigrants, particularly those of African descent, suffered unemployment disproportionately during the economic downturn.

According to the 2011 census, 29,495 persons identified themselves as members of an indigenous group known as Travellers, with a distinct history and culture. Despite applicable antidiscrimination laws and longstanding government policies to redress imbalances, Travellers faced societal discrimination and occasionally denial of access to education, employment, housing, sanitation, and basic services. Travellers received assistance from the government, particularly for education and housing.

The law obliges local officials to develop accommodation for Travellers and to solicit Traveller input. Traveller NGOs asserted many communities provided Travellers with housing that was inconsistent with the nomadic Traveller lifestyle or provided transient caravan-camping sites lacking in basic services such as sanitary facilities, electricity, and water.

Acting on an anonymous tip relayed through an investigative news program, Garda officers removed a seven-year-old girl from a Romani home in Dublin on October 21, due to suspicions the child was a trafficking victim; authorities apparently believed the blonde-haired child did not resemble her Romani parents. Separately, on October 22, authorities removed a fair-haired, blue-eyed, two-year-old boy from his Romani parents in the Irish midlands based on similar suspicions. Authorities eventually returned both children to their homes following confirmation of their parentage. As of late November, the ombudsman was investigating police actions in these cases. The stories sparked widespread public and political concern about attitudes towards Roma and the use of racial profiling by police. Public debate on these events reflected the heightened awareness in the country concerning child protection and welfare issues following decades of child abuse scandals.

Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation with respect to employment, goods, services, and education. Although same-sex couples are

prohibited from marrying in the country, civil partnerships are legal. There are no laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

There were no reports of societal violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS or against other groups not covered above.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law protects the rights of workers to form and join independent unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively, and these rights were respected. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and provides for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. Police and military personnel may form associations, but technically not unions, to represent them in matters of pay, working conditions, and general welfare.

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without government interference, and this right was exercised. The law provides for the right to strike, except for police and military personnel, and workers exercised this right in both the public and private sectors. Labor unions have the right to pursue collective bargaining and in most instances did so freely. The law does not require employers to engage in collective bargaining. There were no reports of antiunion discrimination.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. The government effectively enforced the law.

There were reports of forced labor practices. NGOs alleged employers subjected men and women to forced labor in construction, commercial fishing, as domestic servants in private homes, and in agriculture.

In June the government decided to criminalize forced labor, but trade unions contended more needed to be done to identify and support victims and prosecute employers.

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <http://www.state.gov/j/tip>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits employment of children under the age of 16 in full-time jobs. Employers may hire children 14 or 15 years old for light work on school holidays as part of an approved work experience or educational program. Employers may hire children over 15 on a part-time basis during the school year. The law establishes rest intervals and maximum working hours, prohibits the employment of 18-year-olds for late night work, and requires employers to keep detailed records of workers under 18 years of age.

The Office of the Labor Inspectorate at the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment was responsible for enforcement and was generally effective.

The government implemented laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace, and these laws were effectively enforced.

d. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The national minimum hourly wage was 8.65 euros (\$11.70). Allegations that employers at times paid foreign migrant workers below the minimum wage, particularly in the rural agricultural and construction sectors, persisted. Laws establishing and regulating wage levels cover foreign migrant workers. The standard workweek was 39 hours. The law limits work in the industrial sector to nine hours per day and 48 hours per week. The law limits overtime work to two hours per day, 12 hours per week, and 240 hours per year. The government effectively enforced these standards. Although there is no statutory entitlement, premium pay for overtime could be arranged between employer and employee. The government sets occupational health and safety standards.

The law requires equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

The informal economy was small. While largely undocumented and not reported, the agriculture and services sectors historically have had the most informal labor. Recent reports, however, indicated the informal economy, which encompassed everything from narcotics to cash-only employment, could be growing as the country dealt with a prolonged economic slump.

The government operated the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) independent of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation, to monitor employment practices. The NERA operated with a staff of 102, including 62 labor inspectors and nine inspector-team managers, and was active and effective during the year.

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation is responsible for enforcing occupational safety laws, and these laws provided adequate and comprehensive protection. There were no complaints from either labor or management during the year regarding shortcomings in enforcement.